

Testimony in SUPPORT of H5929 The Doula Reimbursement Act
and Budget Article 12 Section 12d Perinatal Doula Services

Rhode Island House Committee on Finance, Wednesday, April 14, 2021

Dear Chairman Abney and member of the House Committee on Finance,

My name is Preetilata Hashemi and I live in Providence, Rhode Island. I stand in strong support of H5929 The Doula Reimbursement Act and Budget Article 12 Section 12d Perinatal Doula Services. This bill would ensure that doulas, who are nonmedical professionals trained in supporting childbearing people and families through the perinatal period, are fairly compensated for our work.

I am a community-based doula in Providence. I serve Black and Brown families through the perinatal period, to make sure they are informed, listened to, have access to the resources they need, and are able to advocate for themselves. My primary goal is to make sure families of color are treated with dignity, which is too often not the case in this country and in our state's hospitals. Most of the work I've done for my community has been unpaid.

In addition to my doula work, I am also certified maternal-child health specialist and a member of Rhode Island's Pregnancy and Postpartum Death Review Committee. We have a maternal mortality crisis in this country and in this state. Women of color, especially Black and Indigenous women, are dying or having near-misses during and after pregnancy due to preventable causes. Community-based and community-led birth support is critical for maternal and reproductive justice.

This bill and budget article is an important step in mitigating the maternal health crisis in our state. Doula support has been proven to reduce premature births and newborn illnesses, improve black maternal health outcomes by providing quality and consistent care in labor and delivery, and reduce medical spending by eliminating unnecessary procedures and reducing pregnancy and birth-related complication, including reducing c-sections by 23%.

Currently, doulas services are not covered by insurance in RI. This means that **families are not receiving important birth support and doulas who do this work out of love for their community, do so at a cost to their own families.**

In closing, I urge you to support H5929 and Budget Article 12 Section 12d Perinatal Doula Service

Sincerely,

Preetilata Hashemi